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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims supersedes all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said method comprising:

a) storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating rules;

c) expanding the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular rule; and

d) comparing the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween.

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2. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein:
each stored rule comprises a subject portion identifying one or more system users, a system command portion identifying the system command to which the rule relates, and an object portion identifying one or more system ~~objects~~ object to which the rule applies; and
when any of the system rules identify more than one system user in the subject portion, and/or more than one system objects in the object portion, then expanding such rules to produce replacement rules having a single system user in the subject portion, and a single system object in the object portion, said replacement rules being produced before the expansion step c) is performed.

3. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein each stored rule further comprises a positive indication portion, which indicates whether the rule is to be applied positively or negatively, the method further comprising

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules; and

producing from the semantic data a second graph structure corresponding to the mirror image of the hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system commands, and

wherein the expanding step c) uses the hierarchical semantic relationships of the second graph structure to expand any rules for which the positive indication portion thereof indicates are to be applied negatively.

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4. (Currently Amended) A method of ~~generating a set of system operating rules from an initial set of system operating rules, and~~ identifying conflicts in ~~[[the]]~~ an initial set of system operating rules using the method of claim 1, wherein said method further comprises generating a set of system operating rules by:

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said method comprising:

a) storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating rules;

c) expanding the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular rule;

d) comparing the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween;

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules; and

(f) reducing the resolved expanded set of initial rules to canonical form to give an ~~optimised~~ optimized set of system operating rules.

6. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 4 further comprising operating a system applying the generated set of system operating rules in the system operation.

7. (Currently Amended) A computer storage medium containing a computer program or suite of programs ~~arranged such that~~ which, when executed by a computer, ~~[[it]]~~ causes the computer to perform the method of claim 1.

8. Cancelled

9. (Currently Amended) A system for identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said system comprising:

a) storage means for storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) data receiving means for receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating ~~rules;~~ rules; and

c) processing means operable to:

c1) expand the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular ~~rule~~; rule; and

c2) compare the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween.

10. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 9, wherein:

each stored rule comprises a subject portion identifying one or more system users, a system command portion identifying the system command to which the rule relates, and an object portion identifying one or more system objects to which the rule applies; and

when any of the system rules identify more than one system users in the subject portion, and/or more than one system objects in the object portion, then the processing means ~~[[to]]~~ expands such rules to produce replacement rules having a single system user in the subject portion, and a single system object in the object portion.

11. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 9, wherein each stored rule further comprises a positive indication portion, which indicates whether the rule is to be applied positively or negatively; and wherein:

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the processing means is further operable to: (i) produce from the semantic data a second graph structure corresponding to the mirror image of the hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system commands; and (ii) to use the hierarchical semantic relationships of the second graph structure to expand any rules for which the positive indication portion thereof indicates are to be applied negatively.

12. (Currently Amended) A system for identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules as in claim 9 ~~which generates~~ further comprising means for generating an optimized set of system operating rules from an initial set of system operating rules, ~~and further comprises:~~ ~~processing means arranged to resolve~~ by resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules.

13. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 12, wherein the processing means also reduces ~~is further arranged to:~~ ~~reduce~~ the resolved expanded set of initial rules to canonical form to give an optimized set of system operating rules.

14. (Currently Amended) A system as in claim 12, which operates ~~further arranged to~~ ~~operate~~ in accordance with the resolved set of system operating rules.

15. (Currently Amended) A system as in claim 13, which operates ~~further arranged to~~ ~~operate~~ in accordance with the optimized set of system operating rules.